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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000313

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [KU](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: MUGNIYAH AFTERMATH: GOK TO PROSECUTE MEMBERS OF "KUWAIT HIZBALLAH"

REF: A. KUWAIT 0307

[¶](#)B. KUWAIT 0205

[¶](#)C. KUWAIT 0175

[¶](#)1. (C) Summary: On February 27, Kuwait's public prosecutor questioned three individuals and issued arrest warrants for five others who were involved in the now-infamous Imad Mugniyah "eulogy" of February 16. By March 13, the GOK had released all of the detained individuals on bail, pending possible prosecution for membership in an illegal political party and sedition. Speculation over the eulogy participants' membership in "Kuwait Hizballah" has stoked fears of the susceptibility of Kuwaiti Shi'a to outside influence. Furthermore, friction between the GOK and Parliament over how to handle two MPs involved in the eulogy was one of several factors contributing to the cabinet's resignation on March 18. The GOK's steps to address this controversy in the coming weeks will likely influence Sunni-Shi'a relations for years to come. End summary.

[¶](#)2. (U) On February 27, Kuwait's public prosecutor questioned three individuals who participated in the February 17 Imad Mugniyah eulogy (ref B): Chief of the National Islamic Alliance (NIA) (aka "Kuwait Hizballah") Saleh Al-Mousa; eulogy sponsor Abdul Amir Al-Attar; and eulogy preacher Walid Al-Mazidi. In addition, Kuwait's public prosecutor issued arrest warrants for five other individuals for lending their verbal support to the rally: former parliamentarians Abdulmohsen Jamal and Nasser Sorkhouh; Municipality Council member Fadhil Safar; Shi'a cleric Shaykh Hussein Al-Maatouq; and NIA Treasurer Hassan Salman. Current National Assembly members Adnan Abdulsamad and Ahmed Lari are also under investigation, and Parliament has been considering lifting their parliamentary immunities to facilitate an eventual prosecution.

[¶](#)3. (U) By March 14, the GOK had released all of the detained individuals on bail, pending their prosecution for belonging to an illegal political party and sedition. The GOK is taking a hard line against the Mugniyah rally participants, accusing them of fanning sectarian tensions and jeopardizing national security. The Minister of Interior has filed a complaint with the Attorney General against MP Abdulsamad for defamation and has threatened to deport all third-country nationals who participated in the eulogy. In addition, Parliament's (Shi'a) National Action Bloc expelled MPs Abdulsamad and Lari from their political coalition, consequently distancing itself from the ensuing political fallout.

[¶](#)4. (U) Speculation over the eulogy participants' membership in "Kuwait Hizballah" has stoked fears of the susceptibility of Kuwaiti Shi'a to outside influence (i.e. Iran). The Kuwaiti public has decried the actions of the NIA in organizing the rally and speculated wildly about the true

strength and influence of "Kuwait Hizballah" in the emirate. This controversy has prompted calls for national unity and a rejection of foreign influence. Nevertheless, friction between the GOK and Parliament over how to handle MPs Abdulsamad and Lari was one of several factors contributing to the cabinet's resignation on March 18.

¶15. (C) Comment: Recent GOK detentions and threats against eulogy participants have led to the perception among Kuwait's Shi'a community that the GOK is acting in a disproportionate and arbitrary fashion. Shi'a are quick to point out that the GOK took no such actions when Salafi Islamists held a similar eulogy for slain Al-Qaeda terrorist Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi in mid-2006. Kuwaiti Shi'a speculate the government has chosen this issue to "flex its muscles" and send a message to other political organizations in the emirate who may harbor ulterior motives.

¶16. (C) In the National Assembly, Sunni Salafist MPs were the leading advocates for removing the parliamentary immunities of Shi'a MPs Abdulsamad and Lari. These actions further stoked Shi'a feelings of official mistreatment. Despite the emotionally charged atmosphere, there has been no intra-sectarian violence to date. The extent to which the GOK prosecutes the Mugniyah eulogizers, and the way it handles public relations with its Shi'a community, will likely influence Sunni-Shi'a relations in Kuwait for years to come. End comment.

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Misenheimer